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Increase of plague—Examination of rats—Haffkine virus.

Plague seems to be on the increase in this city, the cases having rapidly risen to 51 within seven days.

The diagnosis, except rarely, is made after death when the bodies go to the burning ghat or to the burying ground. The premises of the deceased are then visited to search for other suspicious cases, and the room which he occupied is thoroughly washed with bichloride of mercury solution. From the structure of the dwellings no gaseous disinfectant would be of any value.

Dead rats are daily collected in the infected regions to the number of 300 to 400 and some of them are examined for evidences of plague; none has thus far been found, but it may be interesting to note that most of the cases are in the neighborhood of the grain "godowns" or storehouses.

Haffkine virus is given to applicants, but I am told that only a very few have as yet applied for it, about 20, and all those who applied had received inoculation last year. Evidently they appreciated the protection and desired its continuance.

Reports from Bombay—Comparative statistics of plague mortality—Malta fever in Bombay.

Acting Asst. Surg. Edward H. Hume reports, February 6, as follows: The following figures show the progress of plague since the statement published in Public Health Reports on January 1, 1904. In that number the figures were given from September, 1896, to the end of October, 1903.

Summary of plague in Bombay Presidency from June 1 to December 31, 1903.

	Cases.	Deaths.
Total from June 1 to September 30, 1903.....	97,715	69,876
Total for October, 1903.....	66,437	49,335
Total for November, 1903.....	54,709	41,659
Total for December, 1903.....	42,433	32,329
Total from June 1 to December 31, 1903.....	261,294	193,199

These figures show that 73.94 per cent of the cases died, a mortality rate that is perhaps a little lower than is sometimes seen. It would appear as if the number of cases were steadily decreasing, month by month. This was true during December, but the figures for January, when published, will show a decided rise, as I have already reported in my weekly statement. The following is a summary of the plague and total mortality in Bombay city during January 1904:

Weekly summary, January, 1904.

[Population of Bombay, 776,006.]

	Plague attacks.	Plague deaths.	Total mortality.	Rate per 1,000 per annum.
Week ended—				
January 5.....	153	125	728	48.78
January 12.....	207	186	730	48.91
January 19.....	211	189	680	45.56
January 26.....	270	231	763	51.12
February 2.....		384	917	61.44